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MACMILLAN TALKS
Washington, March 19-23, 1959

DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ

(To be raised only at British initiative)

Anticipated British Position

The failure of the recent, short-lived revolt in northern Iraq, in which the UAR was certainly heartily implicated, will probably have at least the short range effect of further consolidating Qasim's control of the country. At the same time, it may well present an opportunity to the Iraqi Communists and their supporters to extend their influence on the regime and to secure the elimination of additional anti-Communist elements from the political scene.

To the extent that the collapse of the Mosul revolt has resulted in a diminution of Nasser's prestige in the area, it may prove not to have been altogether a bad thing. There may, in fact, be a new opportunity for improvement in the UK and US positions in Iraq. The Western powers should under the circumstances seek to demonstrate good will toward the Qasim regime and, through a willingness to meet Iraqi requests for arms and possibly other forms of assistance, offer Iraq an alternative to complete dependence of the Soviet bloc.

Recommended U.S. Position

The U.S. believes that abortive efforts by anti-Communist nationalist and pro-UAR elements to overthrow the Qasim government serve to facilitate the consolidation of Communist influence in Iraq and tend to increase Qasim's dependence upon Communist and Soviet bloc support. We hold the view that the only feasible course for the present is to seek to allay Iraqi suspicions towards us and to keep the door to cooperation open in the hope that Qasim will try to maintain something of a balance between East and West.

We are, however, seriously concerned at the growth of Communist strength and Soviet influence in Iraq and the possible implications of this trend for the rest of the area. We foresee that our efforts to offer Qasim an alternative to undue reliance on the Soviet bloc may be viewed by the UAR as US-UK support for Iraq in the present Cairo-Baghdad struggle. In the longer run, we are inclined to believe that pan-Arab nationalism -- for all its anti-Western overtones -- is the only political movement with sufficient area appeal to offer an effective challenge to the Soviet-backed Arab Communist movement. Our policy and behavior toward Iraq should continuously be framed with this in mind. This does not mean unqualified support for Nasser over the short range nor abandonment of or opposition to Qasim, but rather a policy for the immediate future of seeking to maintain inconspicuous normal and friendly relations with both the Nasser and the Qasim Governments.

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